

"Their holidays commence with the month of June, and last about 15 days. The mares having cast, a short time is allowed the colts to suck, that they may acquire strength; they are then tied up, or pent in coops about the hut, to prevent their sucking at will; which is only allowed twice a day, when the mares are milked. The milk is collected in symirs, or large leather buckets formed like a bottle, wide at bottom, and narrow at the top, each [117] containing about an anker; into this a small piece of the stomach of a calf or colt is thrown, and some water mixed with it. It is then kept in constant agitation by a broad-ended stick, until it ferments, and acquires an agreeable acidity, which is very nourishing; and if taken in great quantities, it has an intoxicating quality. Of this drink, which they call koumis, every one collects as much as he can; and some of the chiefs obtain more than 500 ankers of it. A day is then fixed upon by each chief to consecrate his stock, which is performed as follows: [RCH: see category 116, pp. 117-119]. "

"[RCH: in the koumis festival] They all now go out of the hut, and seat themselves on the strewed branches of birch, in half circles fronting the east. All the symirs [RCH: leather buckets] are carried out, and placed between the branches of trees stuck in the earth, and they commence drinking; every crescent having their symirs, tshoron, [RCH: large goblets] and presiding shaman, who fills the goblet, and pushes it about with the course of the sun. The quantity that they drink is incredible. Tournaments now begin, wrestling, running, leaping, &c.; and if any one carry off the prize in all the achievements, he is esteemed as particularly favoured by the deities, and receives more respect and [119] credit in his testimony than falls to the lot of a common man. When the ceremony is finished, they mount their horses, forming half circles, drink a parting draught, and, wheeling round with the sun's course, ride home. Women attend, and form parties among themselves at some distance from the men, where they drink, dance, &c."

"I venture to quote from the bibliographical rarity 'Reisen' (page 172, vol. ii.), by Gmelin, of whose impartiality and honesty all polar explorers hold so high an opinion!

'All the holidays are devoted more to the devil than to God. Drunkenness and licentious behaviour give a very bad example to the numerous heathen, who see the greatest pleasure of the inhabitants that consists in drunkenness; and not the drunkenness confined to one occasion, one evening, for example, for the drunkenness that infects all the people at these times is such that no astrologer could find even one happy hour when they are sober, for to them all hours are the same. On Christmas Day a kind of infection seizes the people, like a fever, from which on the second or third day all become quite mad. The illness culminates on the fourteenth day in a general madness, which does not end for five or six weeks. During the week before Lent they are seized with a fresh paroxysm, from which they recover in eight days. In spring, at Easter time, this madness returns, with the difference that, owing to Lent, the attack is shorter but fiercer and ends on the seventh day. Like convalescents who are just recovering from a serious illness, the people only very gradually resume their normal life--that is to say, they are drunk for only four days in the week. Sometimes the madness returns with double strength, and then they are drunk for eight days at a time. I consider that drunkenness is a disease which, like epilepsy, ends only with death.' [199]

Such a statement of the habits of the Yakuts is given by Gmelin."

"While making our final preparations to depart, all the inhabitants of the Yakout settlement assembled at our tent and commenced a systematic begging proceeding, each asking for some of every thing we had; but their preferences were for tea and alcohol, or vodki, as they called it. The former we had to refuse to them altogether, though the latter was liberally distributed to men, women, and children, as all imbibe, and not many minutes elapsed before the whole community were in a condition of delectable uncertainty and indifference. At length all was in readiness, and we once more mounted our deer and moved on our way amid the parting 'prostchis' of our tipsy friends."

"Milk is in general request among them, whether from cows or mares; and when they are [302] in the neighbourhood of the Russians, and can get flour, they do so; but far away in the forests they make a sort of porridge or bread, not exactly of sawdust, but of the under bark of the spruce, fir, and larch, which they cut in small pieces, or pound in a mortar, mixing it with milk, or with dried fish, or boiling it with glutinous tops of the young sprouts. In spring, when the sap is rising, they gather their bark harvest. They make also fermented beverages of milk; and in the height of summer, when the mares foal, an orgie is held, at which the men drain enormous bowls of this intoxicating liquor; whilst the women, denied the privilege of intoxication, solace themselves by getting as near to it as they can by smoking tobacco. The distillation of sour milk is also practised, producing a coarse spirit known as arigui. They devour likewise enormous quantities of melted butter. This also can be prepared in such a way as to cause intoxication when taken in sufficient quantities."

12: Galitzin -- 148
116, 261, 273, 583, 585

N-2

(no date) 1853

Yakut

"Marriage is performed without any kind of ceremony. When a Yacoute wishes to obtain the hand of a girl, he must agree with the father respecting the price to be paid for her: this purchase money is called the kolim. The wedding, and the banquet which accompanies it, take place in the house of the father-in-law of the bridegroom, but at the expense of the latter. The rejoicings are prolonged twice twenty-four hours. During the kourourne (banquet) they drink a quantity of koumise, a kind of fermented beverage made with mares' milk; more rarely brandy distilled from corn, which is scarce and consequently expensive. They eat horse-flesh, beef, and moles, as dishes of the first course. As a second course, they serve on the table a dish filled with drippings. This is considered the most refined dainty. The khamiak, which is a large spoon, goes all round, and each guest drinks plentifully of the nectar. There are some gluttons among them, who, after having crammed their stomach with meat, are still capable of swallowing a hundred spoonfuls of melted fat. The bridegroom cannot take away his bride until the kolim has been wholly paid for; otherwise she continues to live with her father. Sometimes the debt is only discharged by instalments, paid at long intervals, and at each of these instalments the husband comes to spend a few days with his wife.

"From Jakutsk to the river Aldan, 350 wersts distant, the road led me through Jakutish ulusses, or dwelling-places, over plains scattered with woods, lakes, corn-fields, and meadows. The woods, everywhere, consisted of larch and beech-trees. An uluss comprehends a certain number of dwellings, under the government of a Knäsck (1), or elder. We generally passed our nights in the jurts of these Knäsks,

1. Knäs--the diminutive of this word signifies, in Russian, a prince.

and were always received with great kindness. Hospitality is, in fact, the first virtue among the Jakuts in general. No sooner does a traveller arrive at a place, than they hasten towards him, helping him off his horse, and conducting him into their yurt, enlarging their fire, [9] taking off his clothes, and cleaning them from the snow, &c. The bed is made ready for him in the most retired place, the table covered with the best their house can afford, and his comfort consulted in every particular to the utmost of their power; while to all this civility they sometimes add the present of a fox's or a sable's skin, I always strove to repay their kindness by such trifles as I knew to be most acceptable. Tobacco is a great luxury with them; but they are so extravagantly fond of brandy, that when one glass is given them they make no scruple of asking for a second, and even a third."

116, 234, 273, 796

"In June and July, when the mares foal, the Yakuts show themselves as skilful as the Bashkirs, Buraets, and other Siberian tribes, in the art of setting mare's milk into the vinous fermentation. They then celebrate a religious thanksgiving and festival, at which the men empty off, at a single draught, immense wooden goblets of these intoxicating drinks. The women are, on these occasions, obliged to content themselves with the intoxication of tobacco fumes. There are some, also, who distil the sour milk, as is done by the Buraets, in an iron kettle; which, in order to collect the vapours driven off, is covered with a board, and provided with a wooden tube passing under water. The Yakutian name, aruigui, designates both this national spirit and [300] Russian brandy. Another oily kind of drink, made of milk, is used in winter; the Yakuts call it arui, but the Russians, in plain terms, melted Yakutian butter; and this, too, is capable of intoxicating if it be taken in sufficient quantity. Besides these, all kinds of fish and animals of the forest are eaten by the Yakuts, without scruple, and without much delicacy of selection. The branch of this nation which is cut off from the rest, near the shores of the Icy Sea, are able to conform to necessity, and to subsist entirely on this kind of food for the keeping of reindeer, which enriches the Tunguzes in that quarter, has never succeeded with the Yakuts."

24: Wrangell--37-38
116, 273, 276, 437

G-3

(1820-23) 1842

Yakut

"Both men and women are passionately fond of smoking tobacco, preferring the most pungent kinds, especially the Circassian. They swallow the smoke, and it produces a kind of stupefaction closely resembling intoxication; and if provoked when in this state, the consequences are often dangerous. Bran-[38]dy is also used, though the long inland carriage makes it extremely dear. The Russian traders konw [sic] how to avail themselves of these tastes in their traffic for furs."

"Milk prepared in various ways is their principal sus-[343]tenance; and their favorite beverage, as I have already mentioned, is khoomiss, an intoxicating, acidulated liquor, when old. The best is made of mare's milk, and of it they are extravagantly fond. I was curious to examine the large birch-bark tub, containing the mother on which this fermentation is produced, and being always esteemed in proportion to its age, preserved with the nicest care, and oftentimes handed down as a legacy from father to son! "

38: Dobell--43 [2]

G-2

(1812-13) 1830

Yakut

116, 273

"They are, like all the people of Eastern Siberia, rather too fond of ardent spirits; but there are also very many sober good people among them."

dress and dress-ornamentation of the Tartaric peoples, the dual-174
istic religious ideas, and the poetical folk-lore, of Western Asia.—

In their old country they were principally horse-breeders.231
The horses were employed both as beasts of burden and as
animals for riding; their skins were used for clothing; their262
flesh, for food; and kumiss, the fermented drink prepared from273
mare's milk, served not only as a stimulating beverage, but also177
as a most important nutritious food.¹ For a time after their
arrival in their new abode, the horse was still their principal184
domestic animal, and kumiss their essential food; but gradually
the climatic conditions of the country on the one hand, and con-
tact with Russian culture on the other, have exerted a modifying
influence, which is still operative, over both the mental and the
material culture of the Yakut. A small part of the tribe in the
extreme north of the Yakut province must have experienced a
decadence of their former material life. This minority became
reindeer-breeders, dog-breeders, or hunters, and fish-eaters. But
even into these new lines of life the Yakut introduced more
advanced methods.

The tribe as a whole, while engaged in horse and cattle breed-233
ing as their chief occupation, began to increase the number of234
their horned cattle at the expense of their number of horses.439
Of cow's milk they could make, for use during the long winter,241
butter, a kind of cheese, and some other milk products which262
cannot, as we shall see later, be made from mare's milk. The
Russian gold-mining companies on the rivers Olekma and Vitim
proved profitable buyers of these cattle, and this gave an im-
petus to the raising of them. Finally, the cultivation of cereal [177]
plants, borrowed from the Russians in the southern parts of
the Yakut Province, where the climate allows of it, has made
such progress in the last twenty years, that at present agricul-
ture is the chief occupation, and bread the staple food, of many
Yakut families of the District of Yakutak, and particularly of
that of Olekmipak. Nowadays large droves of horses, and231

¹ Some travellers consider that the Yakut horse belongs to the present race
of horses of the steppes of southwestern Siberia; but it is difficult to say
whether the Yakut horse of to-day has any connection with the extinct horse,
the fossil remains of which have been found in the polar regions of north-
eastern Siberia.

231 mares for milking, can be found only in those districts far removed from the centres of influence of Russian culture, and they belong to a few very rich families.

178 Together with the passing of the production of kumiss, the
273 ancient ornamented kumiss vessels and goblets are also disappearing, as well as the customs, festivals, and ceremonials associated with the production and use of kumiss. Kumiss, which

234 of late has been recommended by physicians as an excellent therapeutic agent in some diseases, was known as a nutritious form

262 of food in remotest antiquity to all the nomadic peoples of Central Asia and of the southeastern part of Europe. Herodotus also mentions it. It is poorer in fat, casein, albumen, and salts, but much richer in milk-sugar, than cow's milk, and therefore is not adapted for butter and cheese making. Fresh mare's milk tastes somewhat disagreeably sweetish. The Yakut do not like it fresh as a drink, but they take it when it is boiled, and also in their tea. Formerly they made from it—cooked with the pounded roots of *Lilium spectabile*, *L. martagon*, *Butomus umbellatus*, or *Artemisia vulgaris*—a kind of gruel called *butahas*. As far as we know at present, the preparation of kumiss from mare's milk is based on the fermentation caused by micro-organisms. Under their influence, the milk-sugar turns to lactic acid. When this process is over, the fermentation of alcohol from the lactic acid begins. It has been found of late years that the micro-organisms of kumiss, like those of kephir (a fermented drink prepared from cow's milk), form grains, which can be washed, dried, and preserved. With their aid, kumiss is nowadays prepared for medicinal purposes.

234 The Yakut, like the Kirghis and Bashkir, use as a ferment
273 some old kumiss or the residue of the kumiss of the past year, carefully collected from the vessels, and dried and preserved. This ferment of kumiss is called *xoyū* ("pulp"). If they have none, the Yakut, as well as the Bashkir, use sour cow's milk as a ferment; but such kumiss is not considered good by the Yakut. When the mare is being milked, buckets made of birch-bark (see Plate XXII, Fig. 4) are used as vessels to receive the fluid. When the milking is finished, the buckets are left until the milk becomes cold, when it is diluted with an equal

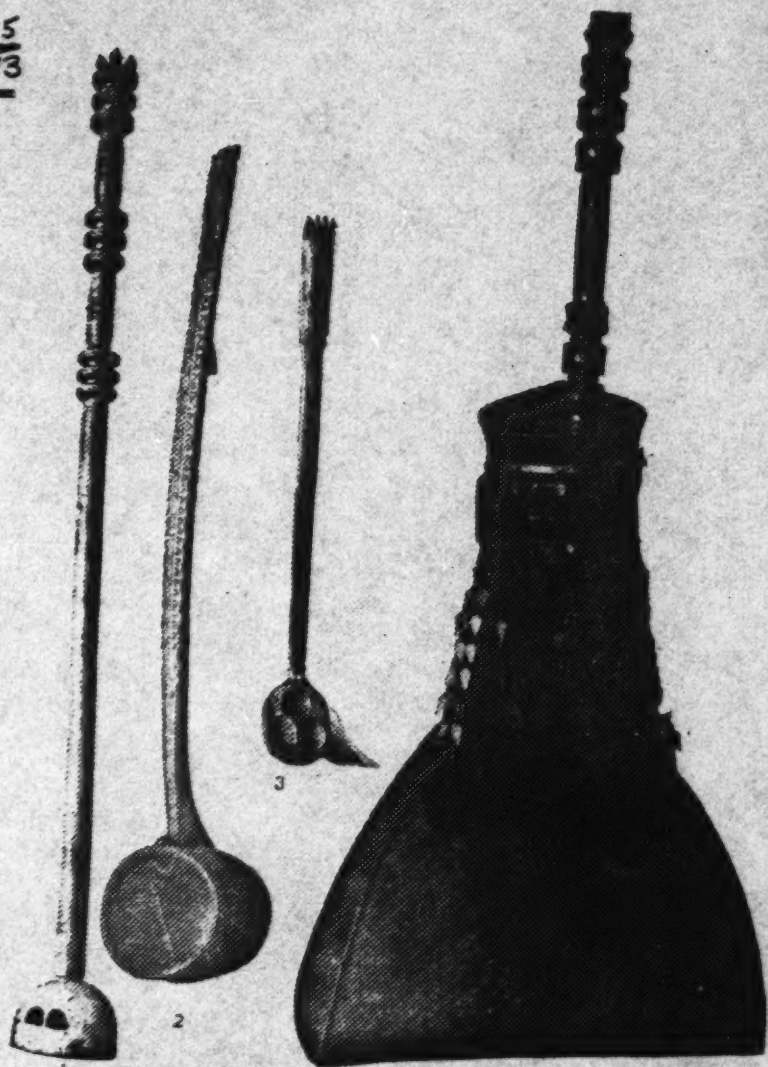
[415]

39: Jochelson E-5 (1888-97) 1906 Yakut

facing p. 261
BOAS ANNIVERSARY VOLUME.

PLATE XVIII.

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4
KUMISS CHURN, STICK, AND LADLES OF THE YAKUT.

quantity of cold water which has been previously boiled; and the mixture is put into an ox-hide bag or churning-vessel called *simir* (Plate XVIII, Fig. 4), and some of the above-mentioned ferment is added to it. The only use of the water is to increase the quantity; so that when a strong kumiss is desired, less water is added to the milk. The churning-bag is made of ox-hide which has been soaked in blood. This gives it a black color, and also makes it water-tight. For the latter purpose it is also smeared, particularly the seams of its sides, with melted butter. It is ornamented with beads of different colors and with brass or silver pendants.

Before the preparation of kumiss, the churn is placed on a low stool (called *simir oloho*) not far from the fireplace (Plate XIX, Fig. 3), and is hung by a long ornamented ribbon, which passes through brass rings at the neck of the vessel, to one of the middle posts of the house. This is done in order that the churning-bag, when softened by the fluid contained in it, shall not drop down. The ribbon is of black and white horsehair twisted, and is ornamented with leather tassels. In the mouth of the churn is a hollow wooden mouthpiece called *kōnkōlōi* ("hollowed through," from *kōndōi*, "hollowed"), through which the churning-stick (*xamsatar*, from the verb *xamsat*, "to stir") passes into the churning-vessel (Plate XVIII, Figs. 1, 4; Plate XIX, Figs. 1, 2). Both the mouthpiece and the churning-stick are ornamented with engravings, and brass or silver rings and pendants. The churning-stick is usually in the shape of a horse's hoof. The process of churning lasts from a day and a half to two days, and the women and children often assist in it. The kumiss is then poured into hide or birch-bark barrels, and is ready for use. Such kumiss has an agreeable acid taste, and contains but very little alcohol. The Yakut have no bottles in which to store their kumiss, but when travelling they put it into skin bags of the same shape as the churning-vessels. The opening of the bag is closed by two small sticks tied together at their ends. The bags are placed on the riding or pack horses like saddle-bags. They thus form skin bottles, in which the fermentation continues working out the alcoholic qualities, and the kumiss becomes a strong and heady drink.

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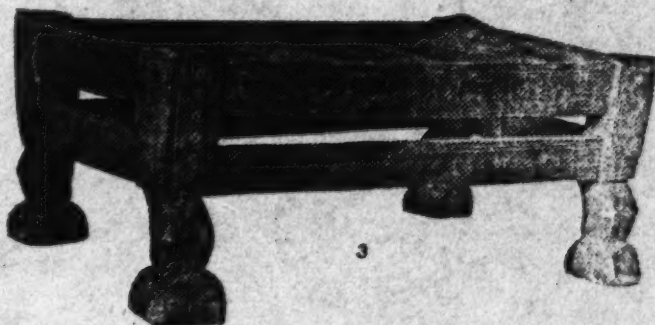
39: Jochelson E-5 (1888-97) 1906 Yakut

facing Page

BOAS ANNIVERSARY VOLUME.

PLATE XIX

415
273
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MOUTHPIECES AND STOOL FOR KUMISS CHURN OF THE YAKUT.

- ²⁶² I have already mentioned that in former times horse-flesh
²⁷³ and kumiss formed the staple food of the Yakut. The hay-
²⁸¹ makers often carried kumiss with them in skin bottles to the
 fields as their only food, and it was sufficient for them. "Kumiss
 slakes the thirst, exhilarates, restores strength, and does not
 overcharge the stomach," say the Yakut. The hay-makers
 worked easily and quickly. Under these conditions, it is not
 surprising that the horse became the object of a particular cult,
 as an animal on which man chiefly depended for his existence.
- 773 Kumiss and fat mare's flesh are regarded in the myths as
 825 food worthy of the heroes of divine origin. The horse, tradi-
 tion says, was let down from heaven and given to man by the
 273 chief of the benevolent deities, Lord Bright-Creator (Ürūn Ayy-
 776 Toyon).¹ According to another tradition recorded by me on
 the Kolyma River, Lord Bright-Creator sent down to earth
 another deity, Bar-Allei-Lord (Bar Allei Toyon), to instruct
 men how to make kumiss. The deity brought with him to the
 earth the ferment for making kumiss (*soyā*). One of the
 ancestors of the Yakut tribe, Dyghyn, says another legend re-
 corded by me, had such large droves of mares, that the kumiss
 made of their milk filled whole lakes, and everybody came to
 their borders and drank.
- 773 In the myths we find the winged steed an important per-
 776 sonage, — the counsellor, assistant, and companion of the hero
 538 in battles and travels. Ayyysyt, the goddess of fecundity, is
 supposed to be near the mare during the first three days of foal-
 ing. The same deity, or another deity of the same name, —
 this is not quite clear, — also assists the lying-in woman. In
 love-songs we often find, by way of praise, the comparison of
 the hero to a colt, and of the heroine to a mare.
- 825 It is regarded as a sin to beat a horse. The bones of a horse
 must not lie on the ground. In olden times the bones of
 horses were placed on a platform. If a Yakut finds in his path

¹ For the division of Yakut supernatural beings into "creators" (*ayg*) and
 "evil spirits" (*akaryg*), see Jochelson, *The Koryak* (Publications of the Jesso
 North Pacific Expedition, Leiden, 1905, Vol. vi, p. 219).

KUMISS FESTIVALS OF THE YAKUT

263

825 the skull of a horse, he picks it up and hangs it on a tree. Even
 — the excrement of the horse is not regarded as unclean.

796 The most important festival among the Yakut is connected
 273 with the preparation and use of kumiss, and is called *ysax*, or
 (kumiss festival. It has both a social and a religious significance. During the summer, in olden times, every rich man arranged a kumiss festival, at which all members of the clan assembled and were entertained. Other people, and frequently whole clans, were invited; and during the festival, defensive and offensive leagues were concluded. Every such festival commenced with sacrifices, and was accompanied with songs, dances, games, horse and foot races, and other contests.

Two kumiss festivals in honor of deities are arranged during the year by the owners of large droves of mares. One of them, in the spring, is consecrated to the Supreme Being and the head of the benevolent deities of the "creators" (*ayy*), — to Lord Bright-Creator. The first milking of mares in the spring is also consecrated to the Supreme Being. The spring festival is called *Ayy yysaxs* ("kumiss festival in honor of the 'creators'"). Spring, as the period of the revival of nature, appears as the season of happiness and abundance. In the prayers addressed to the "creators," they are implored to bestow their blessing upon the people.

The spring kumiss festival takes place in the open air. In the midst of a large smooth grass meadow a kind of altar is erected. This consists of two posts with a crossbeam, and three young birch-trees with young shoots on them (see Plate xvii). The altar is hung round with sacrificial horsehair, and on the ground in front of it are placed ornamented birch-bark and ox-hide barrels filled with kumiss. The skin barrels are tied to the altar-frame by long ornamented straps of soft elk-leather. This is done so that the vessels, when softened by the liquid in them, shall not collapse. The ceremony commences by sacrifices to Lord Bright-Creator and to other "creators." Their names are uttered by the steward of the festival, who may be a shaman or an elder member of the clan. The sacrifices consist of libations of kumiss, in the direction of the dawn, to every

⁷⁹⁶
273 deity; and formerly horses were often consecrated by being driven to the east.¹

The plate just referred to represents one act in a spring festival.² In front of the altar stands the steward, having on one side of him the owner of the drove, and on the other the latter's wife. All three face to the east side of the sky, where the benevolent deities have their abode. On the right side of the altar stand nine innocent youths in a row, and on the left a row of nine pure maidens, with goblets filled with kumiss consecrated to the benevolent deities. The splendid festival attire worn on this occasion³ by a Yakut girl is shown in Plate XX, which represents both back and front views. The trimming consists of valuable fur, silver pendants, and other decorations.

[292] The steward addresses a prayer to the "creators," begging for blessings,—increase of horses and cattle, a good harvest of hay, good health for the people and animals, and an abundance of food. Then he takes the kumiss-festival ladle (*yuyar xompyaha*), and makes a libation, in the direction of the dawn, to the benevolent deities (see Plate XVII). Then, while making a libation to the ground, he addresses the local deity, "the owner of the place" (*ān doidu iccīā*), asking him not to harm the inhabitants of the spot and the members of the clan. After that, the steward, with the help of the sacrificial ladle, proceeds to divine. He throws the ladle towards the sky; and if it falls with the front part upwards, it portends the granting by the deities of future abundance; and all the people utter the joyful cry *Uru!*

[787] Then the boys and girls give the goblets with the sacrificial kumiss, according to the directions of the steward, to the elder and honored members of the clan, both male and female. These, after placing themselves,—the men on the right and the women on the left of the altar,—drink off the kumiss from

[782] ¹ Bloody sacrifices are given only to evil deities, and not to the "creators" (see JOCHELSON, *The Koryak*, I. c., p. 91).

² The festival above mentioned was arranged specially for my benefit; and most of the people, not having ancient dresses, are not clothed in festival attire, as they would have been in olden times. Neither have they enough kumiss-goblets. Most of the goblets to be seen in the photograph were lent by me from the specimens I had acquired in other localities for the collection. This festival took place within two hundred miles of the town of Yakutsk, to the east.

3. [The Spring Kumiss festival--Analyst]

²⁹⁶
273 the goblets, and pass them on to the less important and the younger people. Behind every honored or aged member of the clan, sit or stand his domestics, less esteemed relatives, young men, and laborers. He looks after the welfare of each of these. When the goblet is emptied, it is given back to the steward or the host to be filled.

[262] At the same time, not far from the altar, other stewards are preparing tables, or simply boards on the ground, on which are placed piles of horse and cow flesh, and dishes of melted butter. Every chief of a family or clan receives a large portion of meat and butter, which he divides among his people.

The whole day passes with songs, round dances, games, races and other contests, and shamanistic performances. The poetical choral songs of the young men and girls, in praise of the spring and love, are most interesting.¹ TROSTCHANSKY² relates, also, that during the kumiss festival the change of winter to spring is personated in a contest between two men. One of them, dressed in white, represents spring, and is called "son of 'creator'" (*ayy uola*). The other, clad in black, represents winter, and is called "son of evil spirit" (*abasy uola*).

The autumnal festival is celebrated in honor of the destructive forces, and is therefore called *abasy-ysyax*. This festival is dedicated to the evil spirits (*abasy-lar*), the inhabitants of the west and the representatives of darkness and night, in order that they may not interfere with them in winter, the time of the year when starvation, disease, and death are imminent. This festival, also, takes place in the open air, but at night.

[776] The first night of the festival is in honor of Big-Lord (*Ulu-Toyon*) and the evil spirits of the upper world subordinate to him. The second night is in honor of *Axian Duolai* and his subordinates, the evil spirits of the lower world. To

[782] all of these evil spirits, in addition to the libations of kumiss made to the benevolent deities, blood sacrifices of cattle and horses are also made. This ceremony, according to Trost-

¹ Examples of such songs may be found in МИРОКНОРЪ, *Sibirische Reise* (St. Petersburg, 1873), Part 2, p. 1578; СЯРОКНЕВСКИ, *The Yakut* (St. Petersburg, 1896), Vol. 1, pp. 587 et seq.

² *The Black Faith of the Yakut* (Kasan, 1901), p. 106.

796 chansky,¹ is superintended by nine male and nine female
 273 shamans.

415 The kumiss vessels may be divided into three types, according to their shape:—

1. The *corōn*, an urn-shaped goblet (Plate XXI) with a small foot. These goblets are usually of a very large size, and hold from ten to fifteen litres of kumiss. Their small bases make them unstable. In drinking from them, they are held with both hands.

2. Three-legged goblets, of smaller size (Plate XII, Fig. 2), called *ūs ataxtān corōn*.

3. Cylindrical vessels with let-in bottoms, of varying sizes, and named according to their size,—the small ones, *mārcax*; and the large ones, *ymyya* (Plate XXII, Figs. 1, 3).

415 All these drinking-vessels are made from the strong, tough
 322 wood of the polar birch-tree. The first two types are carved and hollowed from one piece. Formerly the hollowing-out was done with an adze, but later with the help of a chisel. The finish, polish, and decorative work are done with knives only. The sides of these goblets are made very thin, and they easily crack on drying. A goblet left empty in the sun for a single day is sure to crack. To guard against injury, they are kept in a dark, damp place, and are, besides, freely oiled with melted butter. The oiling causes the goblets to take on the appearance of dark-brown polished vessels. For the same reason, the large kumiss ladles are also oiled (see Plate XVIII, Fig. 2).

415 The decorative patterns on these vessels are possibly as old
 531 as the religion with which the vessels are connected. On them we do not find any Central-Asiatic or Chinese decorative motives of the more advanced periods of Asiatic culture; but we do find such decorative motives—consisting of complicated curves, spirals, coils, conventionalized plants and animals—on the clothing, saddles, and silverware of the Yakut. The ornaments on the kumiss vessels consist almost exclusively of geometrical figures, which, judging by their native names, repre-

¹ In one of the Yakut legends recorded by Khudyakoff it is related, that, at a festival in celebration of a marriage, there were present nine male and eight female shamans.



KUMISS DRINKING VESSELS AND BUCKET OF THE YAKUT.

*Unpaginated insert between pp. 266
and 267.*

39: Jochelson E-5 (1888-97) 1906 Yakut

415
273

40: Burr--82

N-2

(no date) 1931

Yakut

116, 273

"The Yakuts, in the old days, suffered much from the abuse of alcohol, as they were too ignorant to appreciate its dangers or else indifferent, provided they enjoyed the stimulation and the beautiful unconsciousness which it induces. I was told that instances were frequent of mutilation through frost-bite arising from Yakuts falling into a stupor in the open after drinking heavily at the traktir. [RCH: i. e., a pub]."

" In one corner of the yourt a leathern trough is fixed, and mare's milk every day put into it, and stirred with a stick, similar to what is made use of in churning butter. Every person who enters, the women particularly, before they attend to any other business, stir the milk a few minutes; it is by this means they procure that sourish, but at the same time pleasant beverage, called [304] koumouiss. If allowed to ferment, it becomes a very potent liquor."

/197 cont./

632 from the Arctic Ocean, owes its present importance less to the rich
 [226] fishing, which could be made useful for the more southerly regions
 [439] only by the establishment of a steamship company like the one
 on the Jenissei /Yenisei/, and more to the trade in arctic foxes
 and in particular in mammoth tusks, which are collected here
 from the entire region and then taken to the European market by
 [136] way of Jakutsk /Yakutsk/ and Irkutsk. Fossil ivory is found
 throughout northern Siberia, although the richest sources are sup-
 posed to be the New Siberian Islands in the Arctic Ocean, but the
 trip there across the frozen ocean involves great difficulties and
 dangers, and we were even told that the government had prohibited
 trading trips there after a party of ivory-seekers perished on one.

161 According to the more detailed reports gathered by
 131 Czekanowsky on his second stay in Bulún, the population of the
 entire ulusses consists of 2,293 souls, 770 of whom are counted
 on the stretches of the Lena lying within the forest region, 30 in
 the forest region along the Olenék, while about 550 live on the
 timber line itself between the Lena and Anábara, and /198/ over
 900 live on the tundra, and, in particular, on the islands at the
 [131] mouth of the Lena and the Olenék. These people, consisting of
 177 Jakuten /Yakut/, or rather Jakutized Tungus, are cut off on all
 sides from intercourse with other human beings by broad, barren
 stretches scarcely traversed by a hunter, certainly to their ad-
 vantage -- I have spoken above, in the description of our sojourn
 in Boljkalák, of the inhabitants' purity of morals -- may it be
 preserved here a very long time and may more active intercourse
 and the cultural advance connected with it exert only a whole-
 426 some influence on these upright primitive people. Up to now --
 ● 273 at least so we were assured -- the natives strictly guard against
 running into debt with the merchants, and liquor, this plague ad-
 vancing in the train of civilization and so corrupting for all
 primitive peoples, seems to be relatively not very widespread
 273 here. I must mention here that the government does not permit,
 or at least permits only under great limitations, the sale of spirits
 to the native tribes of Siberia, as well as to the workers at the
 gold washings, but, in view of the immense tracts of land to be

/198 cont./

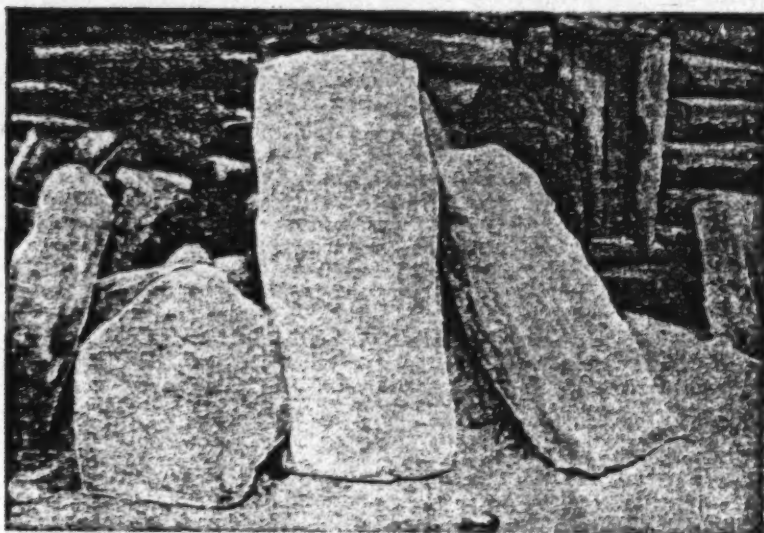
- 273 supervised, is simply not in a position to carry out this measure
273 with great strictness. On the Jenissei in particular, where trade is
437 much brisker than on the Lena, great quantities of liquor are sold
441 to the indigenous tribes by the merchants; the officials, even if
they actually desired to resist bribery by the traders, are only
rarely in a position to stop the mischief, for even though they now
and then seize a shipment of liquor, they are usually obliged to
hand it over again to the owner, who insists that it is needed for
himself and his own workers. The thirst of a Russian, even though
it may be colossal -- the climate also brings this about -- cannot
very well /199/ be lawfully curtailed if it does not lead to excess.
It is certain that the Russian government does at least as much as
any other government in similar circumstances -- particularly the
North American and English ones -- to acquaint the original in-
habitants with the good aspects of civilization and to keep the
corrupting ones away from them, but profit is as dear to the
Russian merchants as to the foreign ones, and liquor, as is well
known, is the favorite article of trade and the most profitable one
for the traders everywhere.

- 122 Before our departure the leaders of the district assembled
123 here gave us a demonstration of their unselfishness which cannot
be appreciated enough. Our guide Atschkássow had already
definitely refused to accept any kind of remuneration for the
service performed for us and for the large number of reindeer
that had been used for our transport for weeks; when we now be-
gan to speak of remuneration here, the golowá told us that the
upráwa had unanimously decided to transport us to the border of
the ulússes without any recompense whatever. At our request this
decision was put in writing by the secretary and signed by all the
members of the upráwa, which was done by an impression of their
seals, to which the secretary added the corresponding names.
These quasi coats-of-arms, any symbol, a flower, an animal, and
the like, blackened with soot, were pressed on paper. We did not
fail to present this official document later to the isprawnik
/isprawnik/ of the Werchojansk /Verkhoyansk/ district, to which
the Shigansker uluss /Zhigansk ulus/ belongs, as well as to the

/217 cont./

122 repugnance against all spirits during the intervals. If a true Siberian at a reception -- and, according to the custom of the country this takes place in connection with every visit in the form of a so-called sakússka, i. e., a variety of spirits along with the necessary spiciest possible morsels to bite on (the direct translation of sakússka) /218/ -- does not accept the customary grain spirits (otschísch-tschennoje, i. e., purified, sc. whisky), but excuses himself in embarrassment, the chances are at least ten to one that he is a victim of sapof. The drinking of spirits in itself, even within limits that somewhat exceed those customary in Europe, does not seem to be harmful in any way here, but rather to be strengthening, particularly for Europeans and their descendants. The fact is, as I can testify from my own experience and that of many of my European acquaintances, that the intoxicating effect of spirits is much weaker in Siberia than in Europe. Czekanowsky and I were emaciated during the Olenék expedition, on which we had to get along without any alcoholic beverages at all for about half a year, but with quite adequate nourishment on the whole otherwise. Liquor certainly does not, however, have this beneficial influence on the indigenous tribes and has a very intoxicating effect on them. I do not know whether the substitutes used in its place by the various Siberian peoples have more beneficial effects. The Burjaten /Buryat/ in southern Siberia get drunk on tarassún, a milk liquor with a most horrible taste; the Tschuktschen /Chukchee/, on a decoction of fly agaric; the Jakuten /Yakut/ even on enormous quantities of butter which they devour in a liquid state by the pood (pood = 40 pounds) and thus put themselves into a drunken-like stupor. /The last paragraph on p. 218, pp. 219-229, and the first paragraph on p. 230 are omitted in the translation; see the foreign text. Page 230 continues as follows./

122 On the next day /December 1/ we reached the last station,
133 Kōng-urách, before the watershed of the Werchojansk /Verkhoyansk/ Range. The mountains came ever closer to our route, but the ascent was so gradual that without watching the barometer we could scarcely have imagined that we were ascending a high range and would soon be at the height of the pass. At this station we met the



Frozen sour milk.

rated as a dish for guests or an accompaniment for other dishes; but most often the cream was churned into butter, also a favorite food of the Yakuts. Apart from normal melted butter, they made khayakh, a special variety of butter (made without removing the yuraga). Butter was readily consumed with the kumys, with bread, or simply without anything else in the liquid form; after frost or exhaustion, this drink quickly warms up the body and restores the strength; warm melted butter was sometimes drunk in large quantities at festivals, weddings, and so on. Naturally, the poorer people, and even the middle peasants, were only able to have such food on rare occasions. The Yakuts knew absolutely nothing of cheese or of the milk vodka known to the southern Siberian pastoralists.

The most important vegetable food for the poorer people had long been pine or larch sapwood. This not very nutritious substitute was made in the dry form for the winter and mixed with butugas, and was sometimes even the chief component of the latter. Greenery and berries were used as condiments for various dishes; the only berries not eaten by the Yakuts were raspberries, since they considered them to be unclean; nor did they eat mushrooms.

In the 19th century agricultural products, chiefly barley flour, began to come into use. The grain was processed by primitive methods. The flour was used to bake unleavened cakes which were eaten with butter or with kyuerchakh (they were baked in the hearth on wooden spikes or in a frying pan); they fried fritters in butter and also consumed salamaat, a thin porridge made of slightly roasted flour boiled in water with a little butter. Yakuts hardly knew about bread made with leavened dough. As regards vegetables, it was almost only in the Olekminskiy Okrug that they were known about and eaten.

A diet of fish was of exceptional importance in some of the northern regions where there were no cattle. In the central ulus fish was eaten in

The Yakuts

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particular by the poorer people who had no cattle, although it was also a secondary diet for the wealthier groups in the population. In the summer, people used to eat fresh fish boiled in water or slightly fried (carp and other small fish), on spikes or in a frying pan (the scales were removed but the innards were left untouched). A great deal of fish was stocked up for the winter, pickled in bark-lined pits; the acidified and half-rotten fish—syma—was then frozen and used to make butugas as a substitute for milk tar. The more valuable types of fish, particularly sterlet, white salmon, and whitefish of various types, were consumed in the raw, frozen form. 262

With rare exceptions, meat was eaten only in the wealthier households. Most highly valued was horsemeat, but even among the rich it was not served too often. Beef was eaten more frequently. The meat of various other animals, especially in the northern hunting regions, was also eaten. It was usually boiled (though attempts were made not to overcook it), and sometimes roasted in the old manner on wooden spikes. Fat was specially highly valued. The carcasses of slaughtered cattle were kept for the winter in frozen form. The Yakuts did not eat certain types of wild animals and birds—beasts of prey, sea gulls, ravens, cuckoos and owls—and they refused to eat the brains of domestic animals. During the 19th century, under Russian influence, bread began to be eaten and later salt, sugar and tea became part of the diet of the Yakuts. Dealers brought in vodka to the ulusy. (17) [273]

Hygiene

The living conditions of the Yakuts before the Revolution were extremely unhygienic. As a result of the filth, overcrowding and stagnant air in the yurt with its earthen floor and cattle-shed right next door conditions were completely abnormal. Furthermore, the Yakuts, particularly in winter, rarely washed themselves, and the washing of clothes was practically unknown. 515

Under the circumstances it is not surprising that there were frequent epidemics. Skin diseases were particularly rampant, and mange, ringworm, ulcers, and so on were due to the permanent contamination of the skin. Eye diseases (trachoma, etc.) were very common, particularly among the older people, a large number of whom lost their sight. According to the 1915 census, there were 110 blind people per 10,000 Yakuts. True leprosy existed in some of the damp, marshy regions; isolation shelters for lepers were arranged in out of the way spots. Tuberculosis was quite common. 64 [744]

Nervous disorders were widespread in the northern regions of Yakutiya, particularly among women, which was due to the difficult living conditions, exhausting work, and to a number of women's diseases, etc. The nervous disorders took such forms as Arctic hysteria, the so-called menerik, which is something like epilepsy; the sick woman throws a fit during which she shouts and raves until she falls asleep exhausted. Another, similar nervous disorder was anypax; the symptoms are an unconscious, involuntary imitation of anything which frightens or astonishes the sufferer.

The Yakuts had no rational method of treating these ailments. They often used primitive domestic cures such as cauterizing, licking the pus from sores and so on. It was usual during sickness to resort to quack doctors and shamans. 757 755

Social Structure

The social structure of the Yakuts, as it had developed by the time of the October Revolution, was a peculiar mishmash of complex forms of 619